

Paper Mill Creek (0615A) Recreational Use Attainability Analysis Summary and Recommendation

A recreational use attainability analysis (RUAA) was conducted on Paper Mill Creek (0615A) in the summer of 2014 to determine the appropriate recreational use and numeric criteria. Paper Mill Creek is an unclassified perennial water body in Angelina County, TX, approximately 7 miles in length. It is currently listed on the 2014 Texas Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List of Impaired Water Bodies due to elevated bacteria levels. It was initially listed in 2006.

The RUAA identified evidence indicating the designated use of primary contact recreation (PCR) should be revised to secondary contact recreation 1 (SCR 1). SCR applies to water bodies where water recreation can occur, but the nature of the recreation does not involve a significant risk of ingestion. SCR 1 applies to intermittent and perennial freshwaters where site-specific information demonstrates that primary contact recreation has little to no likelihood of occurring due to physical characteristics of the water body such as shallow depths or lack of pools.

During the field surveys, field staff did not observe any recreational activities. PCR was not documented as a personal or as an observed use. Two interviewees reported hearing of PCR occurring along the stream (i.e. swimming) although one occurred at the confluence with the Angelina River. Poor water quality and private property/access were the reasons cited for why the creek was not used for recreation. There was no evidence of PCR at Paper Mill Creek. Secondary contact recreation in the form of fishing and boating was documented as a personal use (2), witnessed use (1), and a heard of use (1). Physical characteristics of the stream include an average thalweg of 0.57 meters (22.44 in), 3 pools greater than one meter deep and normal flow. At the time of the surveys, Paper Mill Creek had a mid-range Palmer drought index. A trail, a set of RV/ATV tracks, and a road going to the stream were recorded by field staff. Public access to Paper Mill Creek is very limited. Access into the creek is affected by steep slopes, private property, and thick vegetation.

Limited public access, channel obstructions, and thick vegetation decrease the likelihood of PCR use. In accordance with §307.4 (j)(3)(C) of the Texas Surface Water Quality Standards, the TCEQ recommends a reclassification from PCR to SCR1 with the corresponding geometric mean of 630 colonies *E. coli*/100mL for all of Paper Mill Creek, from the confluence with Angelina River/Sam Rayburn Reservoir (0615) upstream to the confluence with Mill Creek (0615B). This reclassification is appropriate due to “physical conditions related to the natural features of the water body” in accordance with reasons specified in 40 CFR §131.10(g)(5).

Prior to changing the currently assigned recreational use of Paper Mill Creek in the Texas Surface Water Quality Standards, the TCEQ would provide additional public notice and opportunity for public comment. In addition, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency would review this proposed change under the provisions of the federal Clean Water Act.